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Nezperce settles into cozy new library

Supporters donated time, labor and money to match grant

By Kathy Hedberg of the Tribune

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NEZPERCE - Book by book and hand over hand, 6,500 volumes made their way Monday from the old Nezperce city library to a spanking new building a block away.

Nearly 200 elementary and high school students, along with several teachers and other adults, formed the human conveyor belt for about three hours on a brisk autumn afternoon.

"Well, it beats the hell out of me packing them," said David Riggers, one of the organizers of the book chain.

The new 4,100-square-foot library and community center has been almost two years in the making and its opening coincides with the nearly completed Idaho Department of Transportation paving project along Oak Street, which runs through the center of town. Library supporters donated time, labor and \$150,000 to match a grant of equal amount from the Idaho Department of Commerce.

New book shelves were constructed and assembled early Monday morning by Carl Groby of Nezperce and other volunteers.

Monday's event was a way to bring the students into the effort and Maxine Riggers, who spearheaded the library project, said she thinks more people than ever will take advantage of the new digs.

"We really wanted the kids to see what's going on. And it's fun because the kids are passing the books and saying, 'Oh, I've read that book!' and 'Oh, I want to read this one.' "

Riggers pointed out the separate sections for each age group, the bank of computers, a place for historical displays, a community meeting room and several quiet nooks with easy chairs and a fireplace that give the library a cozy ambience.

"I wanted a place for the people to come and feel comfortable, like they're home," Riggers said. "My 7-year-old nephew came in here yesterday and he walked around and he said, 'I'd like to live here.' He said it just right, because that's what I wanted."

Sharon Harris, the librarian, said the library is used by many people in town and has good circulation of books.

"I think it's going to be wonderful, I really am excited about it," Harris said. "Lots of kids love to come in here."

Seth Mikesell, 11, a sixth-grader, is one of those. Mikesell said he visits the library often, reads every day and sometimes stays up until 10 p.m. to finish a good book.

"I've seen lots of good books," he said, passing the volumes on to the next in line. "There's always adventures in books."

Jordan Killmar, 18, a senior at Nezperce High School, said he and some friends were helping the time pass by singing songs as they handed over the books.

"I think it's kind of fun," he said.

Jeanne Wasko, a high school teacher and a member of the library board, said she thought it was a good project for the students, but the younger students didn't last as long as the older ones.

"They needed to have longer arms," she said.

Bill Schmidt, a community member, had been standing in line and passing books for about an hour.

"I'm just glad they're not buckets of water," Schmidt said. "You know what would slow us down? A Playboy magazine."

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